

severe enough and extending over a number of seasons, as is normally the case, much of the potential available habitat must be rendered unsuitable through the drying up of dambos, this would tend towards a sharp reduction in numbers of such a specialised species and confine it to even more circumscribed areas. There are, therefore, grounds for suggesting that the drought period immediately preceding the 1951–52 rainy season, would have been sufficient to reduce the population to a level when the species became sufficiently sparse and localised to avoid easy and obvious discovery and that a build up in numbers has subsequently occurred during the present period of increased rainfall.

Both the Quail and Locust Finches are completely terrestrial in their mode of life, never even perching on grass stems. In this respect they must be unique among the Estrildine Waxbills and indeed weavers and Passerines in general. It is therefore unfortunate that several standard works illustrate them in a perching position which they never assume in life.

## A New Race of the Bunting *Fringillaria capensis* (L.) from Angola

by DR. GUSTAF RUDEBECK

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The Rock Bunting *Fringillaria capensis* (L.) is widely distributed in South Africa, mainly south of the Cunene and Zambezi Rivers, but in the eastern parts of the continent it extends as far north as Nyasaland and adjoining parts of Portuguese East Africa. Just over a hundred years ago, Hartlaub (1857, p. lvii) included the species in his "Verzeichniss derjenigen Vögel Westafricas, welche zugleich in Südafrica angetroffen werden," and on p. 152 in the same work there is a quotation ("Angola: Henders.") to the effect that *capensis* occurs in Angola. However, Reichenow (1904–05, iii, p. 288) put this record in brackets, presumably because Barboza du Bocage (1881) did not mention the species at all. According to later authors (e.g., Sclater 1930, p. 830, and Praed & Grant 1955, p. 1094–1095), *Fringillaria capensis* does not occur north of the South West Africa — Angola border.

In August — October, 1956, the present writer was fortunate to take part in the Visser — Transvaal Museum Expedition to Kaokoveld and Southern Angola. On this occasion, three specimens of *Fringillaria capensis* were collected at Lucira in South-western Angola. They belong to a race which is new to science and described herewith.

*Fringillaria capensis nebulorum* subspecies nova.

*Description:* (head and neck) feathers at base of culmen white, turning into grey higher up on front. Top of head grey with dark streaks. A dark stripe from nostrils along sides of crown, this stripe being broad and black in front but further backwards merging with the dark — but not pure black — streaks on top of head. Lores white, continuing in a stripe above eye to sides of neck. Another broader stripe below the eyes to lower ear-coverts is also white, as is the chin and the throat. The white areas are separated by a black stripe through the eye and another from base of lower

mandible along the malar region; these stripes joining each other on sides of neck. Rather much grey showing on nape, where the dark shaft-streaks are narrower and partly indistinct. *Back* brown with faint traces of rufous but a considerable suffusion of grey, and with narrow (1 – 2 mm.), dark brown shaft-streaks. Upper rump uniformly olive to greyish brown. (*Wings*) upper wing-coverts rich chestnut, small coverts along edge of wing partly white. Primaries and secondaries uniformly brownish; the former, except the outer-most one, edged pale chestnut to whitish, the latter broadly edged chestnut. Hidden parts of inner webs of wing-feathers are paler. Under wing-coverts grey to whitish. (*Under-parts*) breast grey without admixture of brownish. The colour gradually becomes paler towards belly which is whitish. A slight creamy or buffish tinge is visible on belly and lower tail-coverts, being strongest on lower belly. Tibial feathering grey, tips of feathers often whitish. *Tail* dark and dull brown; very indistinct bars visible at certain angles. Outermost rectrix on outer web edged whitish or pale buff. *Bill* horn, base of lower mandible paler. *Legs and claws* blackish.

*Measurements:*

| <i>Collector's number</i>        | <i>Sex</i> | <i>Wing</i> | <i>Tail</i> | <i>Bill</i>  |              |              |
|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|                                  |            |             |             | <i>fr.s.</i> | <i>fr.f.</i> | <i>fr.n.</i> |
| 134                              | ♂          | 80.5        | 63          | 14.5         | 13.5         | 9            |
| 135 ( <i>type of nebulorum</i> ) | ♂          | 81.5        | 64          | 15.5         | 13.5         | 9.5          |
| 136                              | ♂          | 80          | 62          | 15           | 13.5         | 10           |

*Explanations to table:*

“Bill fr.s.” means length of bill from tip to skull, i.e. to the cranio-facial angle.

“Bill fr.f.” means length of bill from tip to feathers, i.e. length of exposed culmen.

“Bill fr.n.” means length of bill from tip to front edge of nostril.

*Type locality:* Lucira, S.W. Angola. For description of habitat, see below. Date: 13th September, 1956. G. Rudebeck legit.

The specimens have been compared with the series in the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo, and the British Museum (Natural History) in London. I have seen series of all races of *Fringillaria capensis*, except the dark-bellied form *smithersii* Plowes from the Chimanimani Mountains in Southern Rhodesia.

*Fringillaria capensis nebulorum* comes close to the race *cloosi* Hoesch & Niethammer, which is known only from the Brandberg, S.W. Africa (about 21° 10' S, 14° 40' E). However, *nebulorum* is readily distinguished by its very light under-parts, and its bill is also slightly longer. The race *bradfieldi* Roberts, with type locality Waterberg Police Post, Waterberg, S.W. Africa (about 20° 30' S, 17° 15' E) is a buffish olive colour on belly, quite different from *nebulorum* and considerably darker than *cloosi*. The bill of *bradfieldi*, though long and pointed in comparison with the races farther south, is shorter than in the races mentioned above.

The trend towards a shorter bill, much darker under-parts, and more broadly striped back is continuing through southern South West Africa and western Cape Province. The races *karasensis*, *ausensis* and *klaverensis*, all described by Roberts, have been founded on the populations breeding in these areas. The form *capensis capensis* (Linnaeus) from the “Cape of

Good Hope'' is the darkest extreme on this side of the continent. In other words, there is a cline from short-billed and dark birds in the south to long-billed and light ones in the north, the extremes being represented by *capensis* and *nebularum*, respectively.

*Fringillaria capensis* is a bird of rocks and stony slopes or plateaus, often with scarce and low vegetation. From its habitat requirements it follows that the bird is common in certain parts of its range but absent or very local in many areas. As far as known, the species is resident. Hence certain populations are presumably effectively isolated. It is reasonable to assume that this has played a part in the evolution of the numerous geographical races nowadays recognized. This does not mean, however, that all the races interposed between *capensis* and *bradfieldi* can be upheld. Vincent (1950, 1952) did not accept *klaverensis*, and Macdonald (1957) has given reasons for synonymizing both *klaverensis* and *ausensis* with the nominate form. Nor has the race *cloosi* been generally admitted. Vincent (l. c.) did not mention it at all; and the two specimens from Brandberg which are in the British Museum have been assigned to *bradfieldi*. In the opinion of the present writer, *cloosi* is a valid race. But no doubt some of Roberts's races were described on slender grounds. However this may be, the clinal variation of the characters mentioned above is clear-cut in Western South Africa, even if the cline is not absolutely continuous or of the same "inclination" all the way.

It may be added that the races of *Fringillaria capensis* which breed in the Karoo and north-eastwards from there (Basutoland, Transvaal, Southern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, &c.), do *not* show such a clear-cut clinal variation in the characters referred to.

The race *plowesi* Vincent (type locality: Matopos near Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia) is surprisingly similar to *nebularum* in colouration but easily separated, even in single specimens, by its much shorter and blunter bill. In a series of 12 males of *plowesi*, the length of the exposed culmen varies from 9.5 to 11.0 mm. (average 10.3 mm.), and the length of bill from nostril is 7 – 8 mm. (average 7.5 mm.). Also, in *plowesi* the colour of the back is sandy brown, often with some admixture of rufous or pale chestnut, and the streaks are broader (2 – 3 mm.), blackish, and sharply contrasting (cf. description of *nebularum* above). The difference in colour is immediately seen in a series but not always in single specimens. The colour on breast and belly is perhaps a trifle paler in *nebularum*.

Lucira, the type locality of the new race, is a small fishing village on the coast of Angola, about 130 miles north of Mossamedes. It is situated on a small beach, squeezed in between cliffs and mountains. Even the coast proper is mainly precipitous, and the mountains reach an estimated height of 300 – 400 metres (ab. 1,000 – 1,300 feet). The landscape is gravelly and very stony, with many steep slopes but also plateau-land with big boulders. The vegetation consist of low herbs and scattered bushes including Euphorbias similar to *E. gregaria* of the Namib Desert of South West Africa (cf. Hoesch & Niethammer 1940, p. 20, fig. 5); but most of the ground is bare. The precipitation is very low, but the mountains are often covered with mist or low-lying clouds. The general type of the country might be described as semi-desert rather than desert.

The specimens of *nebularum* were collected on an undulating plateau

with an abundance of stones and big boulders, about 2 miles inland from the village and at an estimated height of at least 300 metres above sea level.

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## Distribution of *Eremomela icteropygialis* Lafresnaye

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In his "Contribution to the Ornithology of Western South Africa," 1957, p. 136, J. D. Macdonald says of this species:

"The type is in the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Mass., and Mr. J. C. Greenway . . said there is inscribed on its label, in Lafresnaye's handwriting, the words 'des Elephants' which was crossed out and the words 'd'Orange' added. Lafresnaye in his description says, 'said to have come from the Orange River.' It is quite unlikely that the bird was taken on the Olifants River . . . The specimen was probably collected by Levaillant . . ."

Mr. Macdonald does not say why the type is unlikely to have come from the Olifants, except by implication; and there are two possible implications: (a) that it agrees in appearance with a bird from Otjimbingwe and therefore